

**Testimony before the Public Health Committee March 7, 1012**  
**SB 55, Expanding the Membership of the P and T Committee**  
**Submitted by: Marcia DuFore, Executive Director, North Central Regional Mental Health Board**

To Senator Gerrantana, Representative Ritter  
and members of the Public Health Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of raised Senate Bill 55 expanding the membership of the Pharmaceutical and Therapeutics Committee to include a child psychiatrist.

My name is Marcia DuFore. I am testifying as Executive Director of the North Central Regional Mental Health Board (NCRMHB). Our Board, as mandated by CT Statute, conducts independent public evaluations of mental health services funded by the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS). Our volunteer evaluators include people who use services, their families and concerned citizens in the towns and cities where services are delivered.

Although the services funded by DMHAS are primarily concerned with adults, the young adult program funded by DMHAS is specifically designed to ensure a successful transition for young people with mental health and substance use disorders involved with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to adult mental health services. One of NCRMHB's top priorities for the past 10 years has been the need for specialized services for young adults with mental illness. These are years of great challenge for these young people for completing their education and preparing for the workforce and community life.

Ensuring that the right treatment options are available to them as children can change the course of their lives and, as a side benefit, result in overall savings for our system. And so, out of concern for the future prospects of our youth for healthy, productive lives, we have reason to be concerned about options ensuring their health and treatment as children.

The Pharmaceutical and Therapeutics Committee, also known as the P & T Committee, makes important decisions concerning classes of medications that are available for use on the state's Preferred Drug List (PDL). Some of the medications considered by this committee are psychotropic medications. Psychotropic medicines have proven to be an effective component of individualized treatment for improving the emotional and behavioral health of children and adolescents diagnosed with mental illness. Prescribing psychotropic medications for children and adolescents requires a competent prescriber, optimally a child and adolescent psychiatrist, with training and qualifications in the use of these medications in this age group. Child and adolescent psychiatrists have broad training in multiple areas of development and developmental psychopathology. Their bio-psychosocial knowledge is essential in the ongoing assessment and treatment process.

The P & T committee needs the expertise of a child psychiatrist to assist them in their evaluation of the effectiveness and necessity of medications required for maximum therapeutic benefit in children and adolescents. Having a child and adolescent psychiatrist with expertise on the use of psychotropic medications, to promote clinical standards for effective pharmacological therapy, including the use of evidence-based systematic assessment and symptom-rating tools and the use of evidence-based pharmacological interventions would certainly be a benefit to the P & T Committee.

And so we ask that you approve the expansion of the P & T Committee to fifteen members and the inclusion of a child psychiatrist on the committee.